



Educators provide the edge in June primary victories

Educators and their labor allies are getting the credit for putting Phil Angelides over the top for the Democratic nomination for governor on Election Day.

Low voter turnout at the polls made the grassroots mobilization more critical than ever.

CTA won 93 percent of the races it got involved in — state-wide, Assembly, state Senate and congressional. Ninety-nine of the

107 candidates recommended by CTA won their races, as did 59 percent of the local school board candidates.

The failure of the two ballot initiatives — Prop. 82, the Preschool for All initiative, and Prop. 81, the library bond — was a major disappointment, but the low turnout made the level of support for the preschool initiative look far worse than it actually is, says CTA President Barbara E. Kerr.

Plus, negative publicity took out one of the most effective advocates for preschool, Rob Reiner, and chilled participation from others.

Particularly gratifying were the victories in Assembly Districts 45 and 56, for Kevin de Leon, a CTA staff person, and Tony Mendoza, a member of United Teachers Los Angeles who serves on CTA's political action committee (CTA-ABC), respectively.

CTA also joined with EdVoice, a PAC that includes Silicon Valley business interests, to help Paul Krekorian win in the 43rd Assembly District.

Celebrating victory with gubernatorial candidate Phil Angelides (above) is CTA President Barbara E. Kerr (on stage behind Angelides' daughters). Facing page, from left: Vice President David A. Sanchez, Secretary-Treasurer Dean E. Vogel, NEA Director Virginia Ann G. Shadwick and, in background, CTA Board member Don Bridge wait for Angelides to declare victory.

Other independent expenditure committees in which CTA participated were equally successful. The Opportunity PAC, which



CTA photos by Trudy Stephenson Willis

includes other public employee unions, won in three of the four races in which it had an interest. A new PAC that includes teachers, firefighters and correctional officers prevailed in all four of the races in which it had an interest.

At the Democratic Party-sponsored unity rally held the day after the election, where Angelides and his opponent Steve Westly stood side by side with other Democratic nominees under a banner that said "Democrats protect real people," Kerr was the only non-politician given a speaking role. She took the opportunity to let everyone know the coalition that defeated Schwarzenegger's ballot measures last November would be working for the governor's defeat this November.

"We can be proud of what we accomplished in the primary, but we are a long way from done," says Kerr. "The general election will determine who the constitutional officers are and who will lead this state for the next four years. A lot is at stake. We won a terrific victory last November, but it was a defensive victory. If we want to make our victory truly meaningful, we will have to prevail this November."

Revised budget repays debt, settles lawsuit over funding

Better late than never. In a major victory for students and schools, the governor's revised state budget proposal includes \$5 billion for schools and repays all the money owed to public education under the 2004 agreement he made with the education community but refused to honor. This is the news that California's 6.2 million students have been waiting for. It settles the school-funding lawsuit CTA filed against Gov. Schwarzenegger last August.

In addition, the revised state budget proposal includes an exciting opportunity to provide assistance, rather than sanctions, to schools that need help the most. At press time in mid-June, the Legislature had not yet adopted a state budget, but the governor's education funding repayment plan was not in any danger.

"This is a good thing for our schools and community colleges throughout California," says CTA President Barbara E. Kerr.

"Having all the money owed to our schools under Proposition 98 and the governor's agreement of 2004 restored to our students is the news we've been waiting for. It is especially good for those students who live in high-poverty areas and who do not speak English as a first language. Using some of the repayment money to improve learning and instruction in our schools of greatest need will help us close the achievement gap."

Under the revised budget proposal and lawsuit settlement, public schools will receive \$5 billion due to them under Proposition 98 guarantees. The amount represents repayment of the money owed to education under the 2004 agreement with the education community as well as schools' share of new state revenues. It includes \$2 billion that will be repaid in the 2006-07 proposed budget and \$3 billion to be repaid over a seven-year period, starting in the 2007-08 budget year. The \$3 billion would be used to help schools that

are serving low-income students and English language learners.

Part of the money will also go to community colleges to expand career education programs and improve transfer rates to four-year colleges.

It has been a longtime goal of CTA to increase the resources to the schools of greatest need. The repayment dollars will be used to address the problems facing struggling California public schools, including reducing class sizes, improving teacher and principal training, increasing parental involvement and providing school counselors.

"The repayment of the money owed under Prop. 98 moves us forward," Kerr says. "However, we must recognize that some of it is in one-time dollars. We must now build on this commitment. Teachers look forward to working with the administration and the Legislature to determine how we provide adequate resources for our schools on a long-term basis."

Kerr says CTA supports the governor's \$1.2 billion per-pupil block grant plan for one-time money, but believes the money should be administered at the school site by existing school site councils. "We believe teachers and parents must be included in the decision-making."

The governor's package does not resolve the damage that chronic underfunding has done to the nation's largest public school system. It simply gives back to schools what they were owed under state law.

California's public schools continue to rank 43rd in per-pupil funding, have the most overcrowded classrooms in the country, and have the fewest librarians and counselors per student. In addition, the state must hire at least 100,000 new teachers over the next 10 years.

But the governor's revised budget does include a healthy 5.92 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that is applied to most education programs. With additional equalization aid, some districts will receive nearly 7 percent in COLA funds.

Teachers from around the state are hailing the sudden prospect of schools getting badly needed funding under the governor's repayment plan.

In Sacramento, the funds will help protect librarians and counselors from potential layoffs in the 47,000-student Sacramento City Unified School District, says Marcie Launey, president of Sacramento City Teachers Association. "Our schools need the money because they have never really had enough funding."

In the Bay Area, that money could be used to restore counselor reductions and other cuts in the 31,000-student West Contra Costa Unified School District, says teacher Gail Mendes, president of United Teachers of Richmond. "By targeting our schools of greatest need, the repayment money will be used to reduce class sizes, improve teacher and principal training, and increase parental involvement," Mendes says. "These are all proven remedies for helping students."

In the Los Angeles area, Sarah Ross, president of Associated Pomona Teachers, says, "This money will go far towards helping our neediest students." In the 33,000-student Pomona Unified School District, nearly 73 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The district has ended smaller classes in kindergarten and third grade, and has cut counselors and school nurses, says Ross.

"These funds are good news for students and teachers."

Chapter leaders lobby legislators to support the funding agreement

CTA has reached an agreement with the governor's office that settles the lawsuit filed against Gov. Schwarzenegger last year and restores all the money owed to public education under Proposition 98 and the agreement of 2004.

While this is extremely good news for teachers and public schools, there is still work to be done, observed Eureka Teachers Association President David Orphal. For starters, legislators must pass the budget and implement legislation that supports the settlement. And teachers need to share their funding priorities with legislators, too, before it's too late.

"That's why I jumped on a 6 a.m. flight out of Humboldt County," says Orphal. He was one of 200 teacher leaders who traveled from around the state to Sacramento May 23 to participate in CTA's Lobby Day at the state Capitol. They came to lobby on behalf of students and public education for the best possible budget.

"Things look good, but as a local president, I feel we need more local control than presently exists in the agreement," said Orphal, who shared his views with Assembly Member Patty Berg (D-Eureka). "We don't want the needs of Los Angeles or San Francisco imposed upon a rural district."

Orphal and other CTA leaders emphasized that local control would be possible if the \$1.2 billion block grant for one-time money is administered by existing school site councils. Money will be distributed more equitably and efficiently to classrooms when decisions are made by school site councils rather than by district ad-

ministrators in typical "top-down" fashion.

Accompanying Orphal to Berg's office was Windsor District Educators Association President Pete Stefanisko, who urged the legislator to vote for the \$400 million Teachers' Fund for Classroom Supplies and Materials Grant.

"Teachers are paying more and more for classroom supplies," said Stefanisko. "My classroom budget is about \$100 a year, which pays for pencils. I supplement many of the supplies we need out of my own pocket."

Stefanisko added that most teachers spend hundreds of dollars of their own money on classroom supplies every year, even though the federal tax credit has yet to be reinstated and the state tax credit for teachers has been suspended.

Berg listened attentively to the visiting teachers and thanked them for their input. "There will be trades in the budget," she predicted. "The committees are still meeting."

Teacher lobbyists emphasized that funding the 5.92 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and the education programs that it covers is a top priority, including K-12, county offices of education, categorical programs, class size reduction, adult education and special education.

Special education costs have risen dramatically in the last few years without extra money from the federal government, as Beverly Hills Education Association President Christopher Bushee told a legislative aide for Assembly Member Ted Lieu (D-Torrance).

"School districts have to dip into general funds more and more," said Bushee. "We are hoping some of the money from Sacramento can be used to increase categorical funding in special education."

Coachella Valley Teachers Association President Mike Rosenfeld urged Sen. Denise Ducheny (D-San Diego) to support a budget that funds school breakfast grants and Healthy Start. The programs are important because they help students from low-income areas, but there is nothing "solid" when it comes to funding them under the current budget. Hopefully, that will change, he said.

Also visiting Sen. Ducheny was San Diego Education Association President Terry Pesta, who urged her not to support Sen. Jack Scott's bill, SB 1655, which would undermine collective bargaining agreements in many school districts.

"The bill would give principals complete control over hiring in the lower-decile schools," said Pesta. Under the bill, no public school ranked in deciles 1 through 3 would be required to accept the voluntary transfer of any teacher that is "not acceptable" to the school principal.

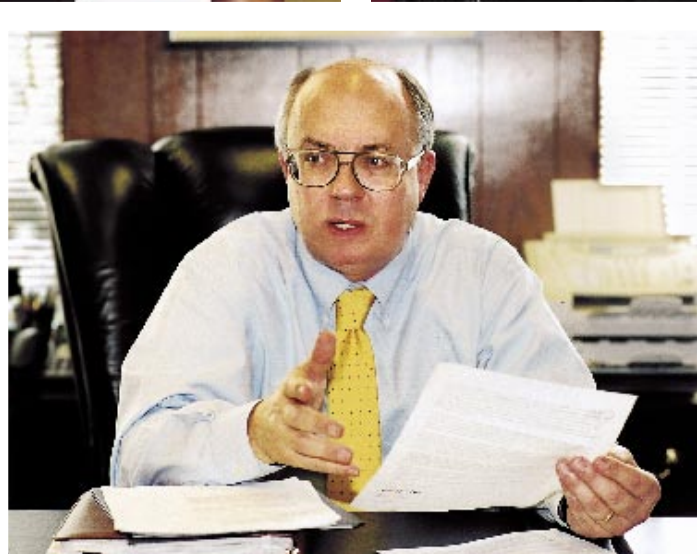
"What's really going to bring quality teachers to lower-decile schools is smaller class size and quality leadership," said Pesta.

In the office of Assembly Member Rudy Bermudez (D-Norwalk), CTA Board member Dan Vaughn spoke out against a mayoral takeover of a school district, which has been proposed by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa:

Continued on page 38



CTA photos by Scott Buschman



Lobby Day participants include (clockwise, from top left) Gail Mendes from Richmond and Tom Morse from San Leandro with Assembly Member Loni Hancock (standing); Christopher Bushee from Beverly Hills; Michael Hickey

from La Honda-Pescadero, and Dixie Johansen and Martha Hanks, both from Ravenswood (East Palo Alto); Senator Joe Simitian; and Cecily Myart-Cruz and Julie Washington, both from Los Angeles.

Charter school managers break off negotiations

In what is believed to be a first for the growing California charter school movement, managers at Camino Nuevo Charter Academy have unilaterally shut down face-to-face negotiations with teachers over the school's first collective bargaining agreement.

Impasse was declared on May 18. The Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) has since notified the Camino Nuevo Teachers Association (CNTA) and school management that a state mediator will be assigned to assist with negotiations.

CNTA President Kate O'Brien, a longtime teacher at the school, expresses disappointment and concern that the school's management has refused to negotiate further. "We were still putting proposals on the table and felt there was opportunity for agreement in many areas. On May 18, we were given a proposal, and when we didn't agree to all of it, they suddenly declared impasse and canceled our remaining three bargaining dates."

Managers at the charter school promote the school as a progressive alternative for students in the MacArthur Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, but were unwilling to negotiate on basic employee rights in a meaningful way.

Teachers at the school work under "at will" contracts, meaning they can be released at any time. In fact, this year several teachers with good evaluations were not asked to return because, according to management, they weren't "good fits."

"The teachers understand that charter schools work differently, and we came here because of that,"

says O'Brien. "We love this school and the community, which is why we are advocating so hard for better working conditions. We can only benefit the students by making long-term commitments to their education. When teachers are not afforded basic due process rights and fear being fired for no reason, the ones who suffer most are the students and families that we serve."

Camino Nuevo has been opposed to the union organizing effort from the beginning and has continued to be intransigent during the bargaining process. The school even refused to put a non-discrimination clause in the contract. Teachers have now started to question the forces behind the anti-union/anti-teacher agenda at the school. Camino Nuevo has corporate supporters, which may be influencing the anti-union stance at the school. The chair of the school's board of directors has made no secret of his concern about supporting unionized charter schools.

"We formed our union in the spirit of our charter — to be equal partners in our students' success," says CNTA bargaining spokesperson Martha Jean. "Their stubbornness at the bargaining table undermines the mission of our school. Other charter school teachers have achieved fair contracts through collective bargaining. What are they afraid of here?"

At press time, teachers were planning a rally to let school leaders and other charter school observers know that "innovation in education does not mean throwing employee rights out the window."

FRANK WELLS



Fairfield-Suisun unions join forces for protest

In an unprecedented show of solidarity in Solano County, more than 400 members of three unions representing teachers and other Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District employees held a rally June 1 to protest the slow progress of salary negotiations.

The rally was held outside the Fairfield City Council chambers just as the school board was about to meet. Joining union and community leaders speaking out at the rally was an official of the California Labor Federation.

The 1,200 teachers represented by the Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association (F-SUTA) have worked under an expired contract since July 2005 and have been negotiating for a new contract since April of that year. They reached a formal bargaining impasse March 17 of this year.

Working under similar conditions are members of the California School Employees Association and the Maintenance Operations Supervisors' union. The unions have joined with F-SUTA

in demanding a fair salary settlement for all employees in the 22,000-student district.

"Attracting and retaining qualified teachers and other employees is the most important goal of a school district," says F-SUTA President Mike Oxley. "This rally of solidarity is reminding the school board that without district employees, there can be no school programs. We all deserve more respect at the bargaining table for the work we do."

Negotiations have dragged on and on. The school district dragged out bargaining for a year before their latest offer was finally put on the table. This offer to teachers is 3.5 percent, including all health benefits, which means that educators would receive less than 2 percent in actual salary increases.

Since their 10-day strike in 2001, Fairfield-Suisun teachers have received raises totaling only 2 percent. During the same period, the unrestricted funds received by the district has increased



CTA photo by Kevin McNamara

Fairfield-Suisun classified employees and maintenance operations supervisors join educators in a joint protest. Right: Robin Waleski and Diane Sexton were among the Belmont-Redwood Shores teachers asking the district to settle now.

they consider maintaining health benefits as the most important issue.

“Health care is key. It’s at the core of our negotiations with the district,” says STA President Bonnie Boggs.

Negotiations have already gone on for more than a year with little progress. Because the California School Employees Association, the union that represents classified staff, is in the same predicament, the two unions have joined forces to pressure the district. STA represents 2,300 educators. CSEA represents 1,500 classified employees.

“People realize that we’re all in this together,” says Boggs, noting the two unions have held several well-attended rallies, including one in which CTA President Barbara E. Kerr brought word of support from colleagues around the state.

Teachers have been picketing outside their schools and have joined their CSEA colleagues at meetings of the board of trustees to show their solidarity.

Stockton teachers have had just a 1 percent raise in three years. This year, the district offered a 3 percent salary increase, but included no relief for teachers in the way of health care costs. Out-of-pocket costs for health benefits have been increasing each year, says Boggs, noting that some teachers are spending as much as 5 percent of their salary on health care.

DALE MARTIN



CTA photo by Dale Martin

Sidewalk protest gets attention in Belmont

Bolstered by parents and community members, the 150-member Belmont-Redwood Shores Faculty Association held a sidewalk protest at two major intersections in Belmont and marched to the school board meeting May 4.

The chapter is at impasse with the district in negotiations.

“Teachers work hard to give students a quality education,” says BRSFA Co-President Sheri Sitkoff. “Our membership deserves a fair salary increase, affordable health benefits and con-

tract language that protects us.”

Teachers in the Belmont and Redwood Shores communities are now the lowest-paid among the nine wealthier school districts in San Mateo County, despite the fact that the district is a basic aid district, has passed a parcel tax and has a significant amount in its reserves.

Although Sitkoff and Co-President Lynn Bjorkquist were hopeful for a settlement before the end of the school year, little progress had been made by June.

14.4 percent and administrative salaries have increased as much as 74.5 percent. The superintendent, who took office in July, received a 27 percent increase over his immediate predecessor.

Since last summer, the construction of a new district office was approved at a cost of \$14.5 million. Even with these costs, the district has millions of dollars more in reserves than the state-recommended 3 percent prudent reserve level.

MIKE MYSLINSKI

Health care at issue in Stockton

Temperatures are rising in Stockton, and so is the heat teachers are turning up to get a fair contract settlement.

The Stockton Teachers Association is so frustrated by the lack of progress in contract talks that members overwhelmingly voted to strike if a contract isn’t achieved after factfinding begins this month. While the teachers are seeking a salary increase,

Long Beach teachers net contract, political gains

The first week of June was a good one for members of the Teachers Association of Long Beach, yielding both school board and city council race victories, and a contract settlement that promises to tone down the vitriol in what had been a very contentious struggle with the Long Beach Unified School District.

On June 6, the teachers' recommended candidate David Barton defeated an incumbent in a runoff election for a seat on the district board of education. Barton, also the newly elected president of the Santa Ana Educators Association, was the second victorious TALB school board candidate in three contested races this year. In April, UTLA member Michael Ellis defeated an incum-

bent Long Beach board member.

In yet another race, TALB staff member Gerrie Schipske won election to the Long Beach City Council, a win that promises to expedite responses to school site and neighborhood safety concerns.

Although Barton's victory left TALB short one vote for a clear majority on the five-person school board, it was soon apparent that a majority was not necessary to begin turning things around.

The first result of TALB's new political clout was a salary settlement that gives members a 4 percent retroactive increase for 2005-06 and a 6 percent increase for 2006-07. Additional increases to longevity steps and salary schedule compaction add an additional

1 percent to the salary package. District contributions to the health care package will be maintained throughout the three-year agreement. Gains were also made for speech pathologists, special education teachers, and for the kindergarten workday.

The settlement ended months of negotiation that had left both sides bitterly divided until an election week offer by the district. The battle had played out in the local press, with attacks in the *Press-Telegram* against both the chapter and individual TALB staff members.

"There was a visible shift in the district attitude at the table immediately before the election," says TALB President Tony Diaz, referring to an unexpected dis-

trict offer heralded with banner headlines in the newspaper. "I think the sudden generosity was an effort to influence public opinion to support their endorsed candidate, the incumbent." After Barton's Election Day victory, the district team's attitude toward getting a settlement became stronger. "It became clear after our win that they were serious about wrapping up negotiations with a fair settlement, and both sides worked quickly to make that happen," says Diaz.

In addition to the election's impact, TALB Bargaining Chair Bob Joplin credits the diversity of the bargaining team and the support of TALB's organizing team in moving the district toward a more realistic offer. "The team was a real

cross section of our members, and they all brought different areas of expertise and perspective,” he says.

The district was also faced with the repercussions of a recently produced interim financial report that supported TALB’s budget analysis.

“When they finally gave us the information we’d been requesting, it was obvious the data was very advantageous to the teachers’ position,” says Joplin.

Diaz sees the settlement and TALB’s political and organizational strength as an opportunity to move forward.

“I’d like to see the district working more closely with us on issues that matter to our members. We’ve made some significant gains, but there’s still room for improvement.”

FRANK WELLS

Bill would end right to bargain teacher transfer

A bill that blames teacher transfer rights for problems schools of greatest need have in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers has survived the Senate despite CTA’s opposition and is facing key tests in the Assembly.

SB 1655 by Senate Education Chair Jack Scott (D-Pasadena) would remove a chapter’s right to bargain transfer policies from the collective bargaining law.

Under the bill’s provisions, principals in Decile 1-3 schools would not have to accept any transfer applicant, even if the teacher is fully credentialed and “highly qualified” as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The bill would also prohibit districts and collective bargaining agreements from giving preference to teachers who wish to transfer voluntarily until after April 15.

The bill would also dictate contract language on the subject of transfers, thereby reducing the scope of bargaining and eliminating the possibility of local solutions to recruitment problems.

The bill could have the effect of keeping highly qualified teachers from transferring into the schools that need them the most, according to CTA advocates. A principal would be allowed to bar a teacher who is outspoken about curriculum and other needed

changes or who is a union activist. The principal would not be required to give a reason for the decision.

The bill does nothing to make schools of greatest need more attractive places to teach — like giving them an infusion of money, lowering class size, improving safety conditions, or requiring high-quality principals.

LEN FELDMAN

To register opposition to SB 1655 (Scott), CTA members can contact their own Assembly members in care of the State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814 or visit CTA’s website [www.cta.org], click on Politics and Legislation, and Contact Your Legislator.

Lobby Day

Continued from page 24

It would concentrate too much control in the hands of one person and take away power from elected representatives.

For the most part, teachers said they felt energized by the lobbying experience. “We’re not coming from an underdog position,” said Ravenswood District Teachers Association President Dixie Johansen after visiting Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto). “The legislators have greeted us with open arms and listened to what we have to say. It’s been a very positive experience.”

“It’s important to be active and diligent and make sure that

the Legislature funds education,” said Martha Hanks, also a member of the Ravenswood chapter in East Palo Alto. “Even with this one-time funding increase, it’s not enough for schools to meet all of the state standards. However, it’s definitely a step in the right direction.”

Stefanisko, of Windsor, felt good about the day’s visits with legislators and could hardly wait to tell his students about Lobby Day. “I’m going to tell them it was very invigorating to meet legislators.

“I definitely think it had an impact.”

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN